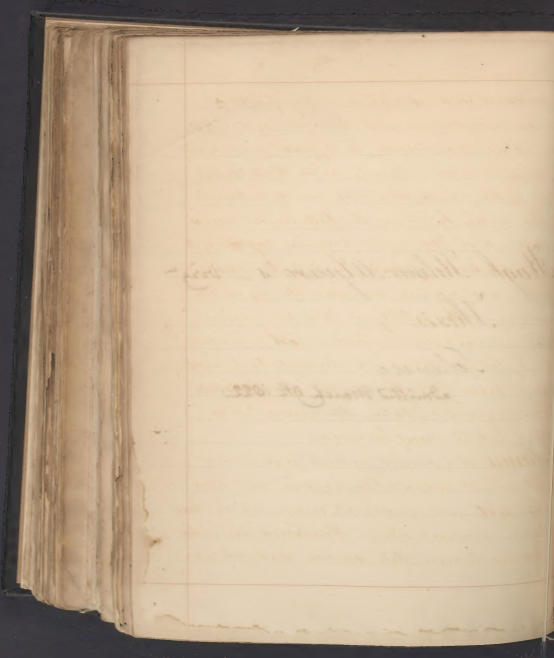


St. John

Hugh Holmes Wilguire's - Virgin
Thesis

Tetanus

admitted March 9th 1822



It is usual in a dissertation on any particular disease, to commence with the origin and different views maintained by different writers, on it; and it is customary to render their dissertations too prolix, and consequently unknown to the reader, by giving the Pathological views of some whose Theory is palpably ~~capable~~ ^{capable} with error and devoid of sense; perhaps the same author will compute the same theory, on the same page; the utility, of thus prolonging dissertation, I cannot conceive, ~~as it~~ ^{as it} serves only to confuse the mind of a student: to prevent myself from falling into the same mistake I have neglected stating the views of any writer but the most modern.

Tetanus is a disease which was known by the most ancient Physicians, but their views of it were incorrect, consequently their practice unsuccessful. Frustrated in their attempts to cure this disease, and yet con-

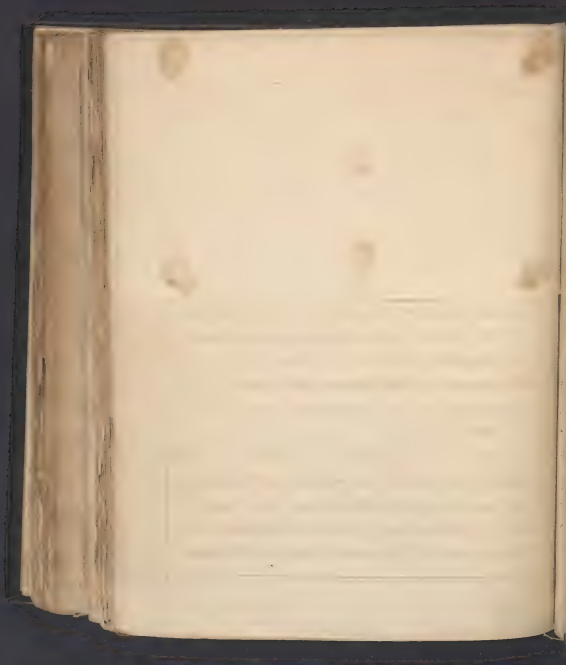
sidering it under the power of medicine
much attention was the consequence of it.
and although so much attention was paid
to it there has not been any certain man-
-ner of treatment discovered of relieving the
unfortunate, ^{inflamm} or obviating its fatal tendency.
To see a fellow ^{creature} tormented with the Lock jaw
produced perhaps by a slight puncture
is racking to the feelings of the most
oblivious, and it has been the lot of the
victim of this depredation to witness its
fatality in several cases. Tetanus occurs most
frequently in the South, although there are Spor-
adic cases every ^{where}. In this Country it very seldom
occurs, except in the warmest seasons. In the
Southern States. It is said to be most common
in the West Indies and chiefly among the negroes
Dr Thomas accounts for it being more com-
mon among ^{them} on account of their being more
exposed to wounds of the feet from going

usually benefited. It occurs in both sexes, of all
ages and Temperaments, and it is said to attack
the male, more than the female, but I presume
this does not arise from any peculiarity in the
male, but from being more exposed than the
female. It has been also observed to attack the
robust more than those of a debilitated con-
stitution. I have known a family of negroes
consisting, of four brethren die with this disease,
a peculiarity strange and unaccountable:
they were generally of a healthy, robust and
apparently of a good constitution; no peculiar-
ity externally was observed, no dissection
was made of either. The first one, a victim
to this disease, was produced by the extrac-
tion of a tooth: the second received a wound
from the wheel of a saw. I was not informed
what course of practice was observed on these
two cases, but upon the following, the Blood
Opium and Mercury were freely used.

The third received a wound in his head from a nail; it was poulticed and apparently was getting well, when he was observed to throw his head upon his shoulder with some violence. These symptoms at first produced no alarm, until their frequency made it necessary to send for a Physician who administered Opium and Mercury, both were used, but the symptoms became more aggravated every day until he died. The fourth of them received a wound in his arm about the middle, the ball passed up the arm, and was extracted on the shoulder. The wound supplicated; and apparently was getting well, when he felt pain at the precordia, which was soon succeeded by spasmodic contraction; and other symptoms of Tetanus which terminated his existence. Perhaps it will be considered that all these accidents were sufficient to

produce Tetanus, I admit it. but at the same
time, I think it strange if there was not
an hereditary disposition to this disease.
that John Pether's should die with a dis-
ease so rare as Tetanus, I think the only
just inference from those cases, ~~and~~ that
there was an idiosyncrasy, which pre-
disposed them to Tetanus, what that idio-
syncrasy was, whether in the muscles, nerves
or vessels, I do not pretend to say, but sub-
mit the fact to those whose qualification
of judging are superior to mine.

The division of this disease has been unprop-
riate minute; to give a peculiar and distinct
name to every part of the system laboring
under the same affection, would render the
science of medicine so replete with Technical
terms, as to require the labour of an age, to
obtain a knowledge of it. It should be the
duty of a writer to render them such, as



prominuous as possible, and to avoid Technical terms when plain words can be substituted, for then, the division of Tetanus into Crisetheticus, Emprostheticus and Pares-Metocus is of no importance, either in a practical or Scientific view, for Science does not consist in superficial views. The only division necessary is into Spasmodic and Symp-tomatic. The last of this division is by far the most common, the other being scarcely known in this country. Spasmodic Tetanus is generally produced by cold, a moisture applied to the body while it is very warm producing a sudden suppression of perspiration. when it is produced by cold it commonly makes its appearance in a few days after the application of it: the first symptom is a sense of stiffness in the neck, which increases, and causes pain when the head is moved. Accompanied with this rigidity is a pain



at the root of the tongue, attended with difficult
respiration, there is also pain at the lower
part of the Sternum; this pain frequently
extends into the back, and causes a retraction
of the head: at the same time the muscles of
the lower jaw which are at first rigid are
now affected with a most violent spasm,
and set the teeth so close together, as not
to admit any thing into the mouth. The
muscles which are affected in this disease
are the Pectorals and External's of the lower
extremities the muscles of the arm, except
those that move the wrists and fingers:
the Pectorals & Deltoid are violently contrac-
ted, so that the shoulders are pulled inward.
the neck's are often ^{drawn} towards the ears, and
the teeth exposed: presenting an object, as
much like any thing else as a human
being; this continual spasm now well
be imagined not to continue long, without

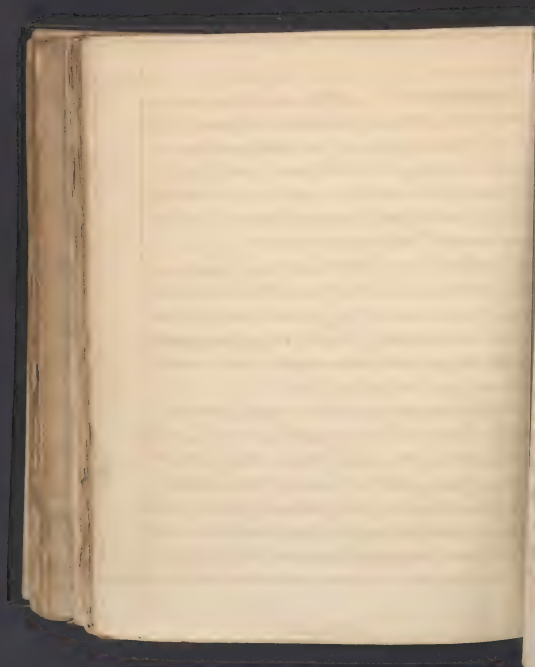


an abatement of its violence or death: after
an abatement of this spasm, the patient is
left weak, and exhausted, with a sighing
breathing as if he had run most excessive
exercises. During the interval of the spasm
the face is flushed, although sometimes pale
and collapsed & the most melancholy ex-
pression. The stomach too is very much out of
order, for if food be administered an epasm
of it immediately takes place. In a case of
Typhus, where the jaws had been lock several
days, I wished to give some nourishment to
the patient, during the suspension of a
spasm. I succeeded the administration of it
by the Spirit of Turpentine, and a spasm was
produced and the food remained on the
stomach attended with happy effect.
During these attacks of spasm, the entire
system must sympathize then and put on
concomitant appearances, the pulse



is contracted, hurried, & intermittent; respiration
is affected in the same manner; the
heat of the body is not generally increased;
if blood is drawn at this state of the disease
it exhibits a dissolved state, or in other words
loss of vitality. This may be the case in the
generality of Leech jaw's but in one case
in which I used the lancet very freely, it
was of an artificial colour: but it was not
dissolved, or did it coagulate sooner than
blood in a healthy state. The appearance
of the tongue is not amarturac, the urine
is generally high coloured.

The appearance of the surface at this
calamitous period, might well be supposed
to sanction the belief of an disorder, that
his suffering had risen to them acute
but it is not so: the interval of the spasm
become shorter and shorter, each one with
increased pain, and additional symptoms

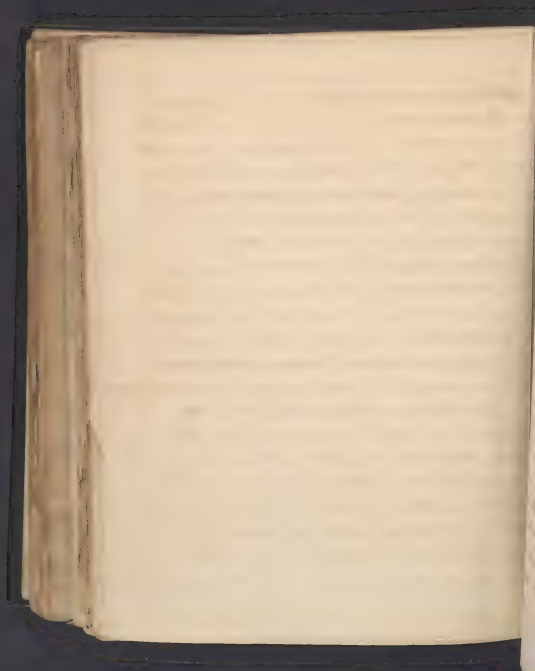


for at this time, a copious sweat flows.
Articulation becomes indistinct: the pulsations
of the heart are increased both in frequency
and force the jaws are locked so fast as not
to admit the least movement; and the eyes
fixed, & sight so denied the unfortunate
sufferer. At this period Delirium comes on
succeeded by continued spasm, which rises
the scene, & sometimes convulsions being on the
tragic end. Tetanus is a rapid disease and gen-
erally terminates on the fourth or fifth day, if the
sufferer survives those critical days his chance
of recovery is increased; his recovery will be
slow, tedious, and not for several months
will his health be restored.

The pathology of this disease is not yet un-
derstood, the contraction and rigidity of the
muscles, caused by nerve excitement, either
immediately applied to them, or by the laws of
sympathetic action (the excitement being



applied to an other part; we are unequalled
with; consequently, to practice on a scientific
plan, would be a vain attempt, we are neces-
sarily obliged to be satisfied with practicing
from analogy confirmed, by experience; The
practice which has succeeded best, as as
soon as possible to produce a Moricnas
Spasmodic; to effect this it must be used in
the commencement of the disease, and used in
large quantities; To moderate the Spasm, &
as palliatives, Opium and Nitro must be
liberally prescribed. I conceive in the cases
I have seen, the Spasm has been moderated more
by Blood-letting than either Opium or
Wine. In one case the Spasm was lock joint
saying, during a very severe Spasm I took
away from her Arm a pint of blood, the
spasm appeared to be for a minute, relaxed
when it suddenly came on again, she placed
her arm under her, and while in that



As soon as the bandage was removed, she bled without being observed, as was supposed, in quantity, she appeared very much sunk; pulse scarcely perceptible, "succeeded in stopping the bleeding, and gave her a table spoon full of Spirit of Turpentine; in less than ten minutes afterwards, her jaws became relaxed together with the whole system; & afterwards gave her Spirit of Turpentine three times a day, and she had not any return of her Spasm; her recovery was remarkably fast, using no medicine to prevent a relapse but the Spirit of Turpentine.

When the use of Opium is determined upon which should be in every case as an auxiliary in relieving and moderating the Spasm, it should be given in very large and repeated doses, for it will not affect the system without using it in much larger doses than is even in other diseases.

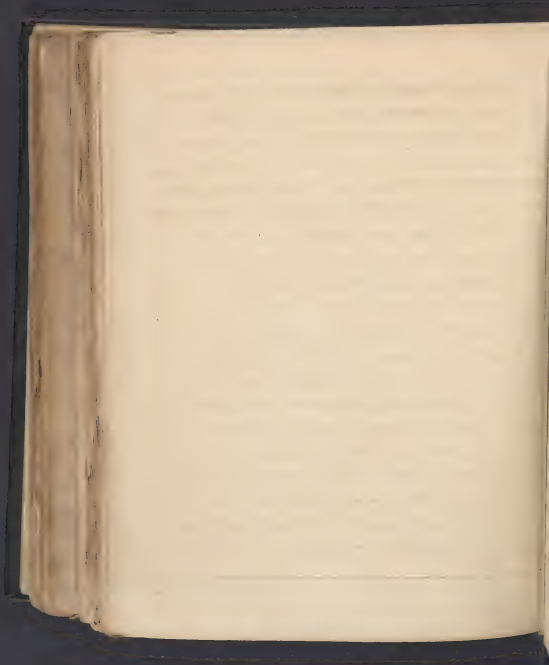


and its effects being soon over it should be frequently administered: Its operation in these cases are not similar to its operation in other diseases: for although it allays the spasm it does not produce sleep, nor that stupor or insensibility, which in other circumstances it does. We should also always commence the administration of it, in the beginning of the disease, and use it in very large doses, for as the disease advances deglutition becomes difficult, consequently the administration of it, is attended with ~~inconvenience~~ ^{difficulty}. Dr Cullen thinks the effects of Ipecac are often lost by the practitioners now being afraid of administering too much. The bowels are affected with spasm in this disease consequently castoreum is to be introduced. Several cases are stated to have been entirely relieved by the use of Cathartici: Dr Hamilton most strenuously recommends their use, which was adopted and followed with success by the



enlightened Professor of the practice of medicine
in a case of Tetanus produced by a collection
of chervi stons in the intestines. when it arises
from a collection of undigested food, or any
indigestible substance in the intestines, there
can be no doubt of the propriety of this practice.
But "ask how large my variables, to comprehend
how it will act so that its action will be
to increase in Spasmodic Tetanus.

Much attention is to be paid to the cause of
Symptomatic Tetanus, when it is produced by
a simple laceration, it should be enlarged with
a scarific and stimulating application to the
part, to produce inflammation, and suppu-
-tion as soon as possible; the most useful for
which purpose is Spirit of Turpentine, but
by V. Not a little has been said of the restora-
tive powers of the cold bath; the particular
period when it would be attended with good
effects has not been ascertained: and until



it is ascertained it may be considered a doubtful remedy. In that particular form of Tetanus denominated Trismus Nascentium, it has been used, but the warm bath is preferred. The treatment of this form of Tetanus, has been lately to use the mullum (arbarum) bath, as soon as the spasm comes on to immerse the child in the bath, in three or four minutes the spasm is relaxed, profuse perspiration breaks out, together with a very great inclination to sleep. after the child awakes, it appears entirely well, but there is great danger of a relapse, and the bath must be used as a preventive.

Gentlemen of the Faculty

I am well aware of the dependencies of this my representation, and I submit to your power with that diffidence which will naturally be excited.

Conscious of my inability to give any thing new to a disease which has hitherto baffled those whose qualifications are superior to mine

consequently I would be doing an injustice to
myself, as well as to those, from whom I have
extracted my ideas, on this subject, were I to
claim any originality in it. my view solely was
to communicate the cases that came under my
own personal observation, with the different forms
& varieties the disease assumed; & the practice which
succeeded best. In stating those cases, do not
for a moment suppose that I consider the cases
I have mentioned sufficient to justify the proce-
dure of the practice, I adopted: willingly will
I yield to your superior judgment, but I would
be doing an injustice to myself, as well as
the world, ^{at large} did I not communicate them.
If the ideas I have embodied are erroneous I seek
to have them set right. If they are right I am
more than recompensed by your approbation.

[Faint, illegible handwriting in a cursive script, likely from an 18th-century manuscript. The text is written in a single column across the page.]